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New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 14 (*continued*)

Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Agency (A/53/286)

Draft resolution (A/53/L.18)

Amendment (A/53/L.19)

Mr. Mra (Myanmar): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to express our sincere thanks to the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for his comprehensive report. This annual report enables us to review the work of the Agency, which is undergoing a dynamic transformation under its Director General, Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei. Allow me also to take this opportunity to assure him of our full support in the discharge of his mandate.

For more than 40 years, the International Atomic Energy Agency, as a special United Nations institution, has provided valuable assistance to Member States in the application of atomic energy for peaceful purposes. There is no denying that the IAEA's prominent role in promoting international cooperation in the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes is today more relevant than ever to the interests of Member States.

The Agency's activities in the area of technical cooperation continue to play an important role in achieving sustainable development in developing countries. As we are all aware, supplying adequate and affordable energy services is an essential element of sustainable development. Here the challenge is to develop those energy services that best support development and the quality of life, especially in developing countries.

In this connection, it is noteworthy that Agenda 21, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, emphasized the integration of environmental and developmental concerns into the decision-making process. Furthermore, Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in December 1997 in Kyoto, refocused attention on energy and the environment and also provided the International Atomic Energy Agency with an opportunity to present information about its work on the costs and benefits of nuclear energy and other energy alternatives. Indeed, that was one of the many examples of the Agency's contributing to the United Nations system-wide objective of sustainable development.

My delegation would also like to comment on the work of the Agency regarding the safety of radiation sources. It cannot be overemphasized that the safety of radiation sources and the security of radioactive material continue to be matters of special concern. There is a growing realization that the world population is exposed to radiation from a number of sources, including natural,

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artificial and occupational sources. The Agency's ongoing support, as a matter of priority, for the model project on the upgrading of radiation and waste safety infrastructures in some developing countries, with the focus on the control of radiation sources, is highly commendable. We are convinced that the Agency's involvement in that respect will bring about a working system of notification, authorization and control, and an inventory of all radiation sources in the participating developing countries.

Let me now briefly touch upon the Agency's nuclear safeguards and verification system, as stipulated in the Statute. Since the decision on the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, the safeguards system and the verification of nuclear non-proliferation have become all the more important. It is therefore imperative that all IAEA safeguards and verification measures be applied in a non-discriminatory manner and in conformity with the relevant provisions of the NPT.

Nutritional deficiencies of energy, protein, vitamins and minerals continue to affect hundreds of millions of people, particularly in the developing world. In this regard, we are pleased to note that the IAEA's programmes directing attention to the use of isotopic techniques to identify populations at risk and to monitor and improve the effectiveness of dietary intervention programmes are benefiting the developing countries. My delegation is also appreciative of the IAEA's role in assisting its 128 member States, almost 80 per cent of which do not have nuclear power programmes, in the use of radionuclides, primarily for research, medical, industrial and agricultural applications.

I wish to take this opportunity to commend the fruitful cooperation between the IAEA and other United Nations bodies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and other international organizations. It is essential that this cooperation be further strengthened.

In conclusion, I would again like to thank Director General Mohamed ElBaradei for his report and for his able guidance of the work of the Agency. We are confident that, under his leadership, the Agency will be able to meet the challenges ahead.

Ms. Rozgoňová (Slovakia): Slovakia associated itself with the statement presented by the representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union. Nevertheless, since Slovakia was recently elected a member of the Board of Governors, I would also like to make a statement on the national level.

First of all, I would like to express our appreciation for the excellent work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), led by Director General Mohamed ElBaradei during the past year.

The Slovak Republic considers the International Atomic Energy Agency to be the key organization which fulfils, through its safeguards system, irreplaceable functions in the observance of the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and in the promotion of international cooperation in the peaceful use of atomic energy. Slovakia also appreciates the role of the Agency in ensuring that the assistance it provides in various forms to member States is not misused for military purposes.

The Agency's success over the 41 years of its existence is the result of the common efforts of the member States and the secretariat in the field of the peaceful use of nuclear energy, as well as in technical cooperation. Slovakia, as a country with an active nuclear programme, ascribes great importance to cooperation with the IAEA in the development of the Slovak nuclear programme and the improvement of its nuclear safety.

I would like to mention the key positions of Slovakia on the nuclear agenda. Slovakia welcomed the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons at the Review and Extension Conference in 1995, which supported the activities of the Agency in the area of technical cooperation and the application of the safeguards system. We believe that the Review Conference in 2000 will result in a positive evaluation of the Treaty implementation and that it will approve the new measures aimed at strengthening the effectiveness and the further improvement of the efficiency of the safeguards system. Slovakia sees the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as very important elements of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament are also strengthened by the growing number of signatories to the Comprehensive

Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which has reached 150, and by its 21 ratifications. Slovakia ratified the CTBT in March 1998 as one of the 44 countries the ratifications of which are necessary for the entry into force of the Treaty. Slovakia supports the process of enhancing cooperation between the Agency and the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organization for political, technical and financial reasons.

The issue of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament was brought to the centre of the international community's attention after the nuclear tests in India and Pakistan. Slovakia expressed its concern about these tests and we hope that, after the recent statements of the Prime Ministers of both countries, India and Pakistan will sign and ratify the CTBT without condition and without delay.

Another contribution to the Review Conference of the NPT in 2000, in our view, is the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to start negotiations on the preparation of a treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. We support the initiative of the Director General of the IAEA to offer the assistance of the Agency to the Conference on Disarmament in developing the technical arrangements for this treaty.

We are in favour of the verification activities of the IAEA with respect to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We welcome the initiative of the Director General to provide the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with the Model Additional Protocol and we hope that it will cooperate fully with the IAEA in the implementation of its safeguards obligations and negotiate the adoption of an Additional Protocol.

Slovakia regrets the decision of Iraq to suspend its cooperation with the Security Council and the IAEA and urges Iraq to observe the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Secretary-General of February 1998.

I would like to turn now to some organizational matters which have been initiated by the Director General.

Slovakia follows with great attention the implementation of the Action Plan, which resulted from the senior management conference in January of this year. In view of the financial difficulties the Agency has been experiencing over the last decade, we welcome the initiatives to put a greater emphasis on the programme and budget formulation process by creating a new programme coordination committee. The process of optimizing resource allocation while maintaining the main functions of the Agency should be carefully evaluated and further developed. The main aim of this process should result in improved cost-effectiveness, to the benefit of member States.

In connection with the Action Plan, my country is looking forward to the preparation of the medium-term strategy, a document which will chart the direction of the Agency over the next five years. We expect that this document will in a very concrete form set out the overall objectives and goals for optimizing resource allocation and maintaining the main functions of the Agency.

In the area of strengthened safeguards systems, Slovakia sees in the conclusion of additional protocols to safeguards agreements a significant contribution to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and the global non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, to which Slovakia is ready to contribute.

After Slovakia's active participation in Committee 24, and the subsequent consultations with the Agency, the Board of Governors approved in September the text of the new agreement between the Slovak Republic and the IAEA for the applications of safeguards in connection with the NPT and the protocol additional to this agreement. The safeguards agreement will replace the present agreement, which was concluded with the Government of the former Czechoslovakia.

Cooperation between the Agency and member States in the area of nuclear safety and radiation protection is one of the most important issues for Slovakia. Nuclear energy plays an important role in the Slovak economy, with nuclear power plants producing nearly 50 per cent of Slovakia's electricity.

This year Slovakia celebrates the twentieth anniversary of the commissioning of the first unit of a nuclear power plant with a water-cooled and water-moderated reactor (WWER) at Jaslovske Bohunice.

The commissioning of the first unit of the second nuclear power plant in Slovakia, the Mochovce nuclear power plant, took place on 9 June 1998. The commissioning of the Mochovce nuclear power plant unit 2 is planned for 1999. The commissioning of this power plant was preceded by technically and financially

demanding completion work and safety upgrading programmes. The Mochovce nuclear power plant is an example of international cooperation in achieving internationally acceptable safety standards. Companies from France, Germany, the United States, the Russian Federation, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, together with the Agency, participated significantly in the upgrading of the safety level of this nuclear power plant. The competent Slovak authorities consider the Agency's assistance in particular to be an essential component of international transparency in all safety-related matters.

Slovakia ratified the Convention on Nuclear Safety on 7 March 1995, as the first country with land-based nuclear reactors in operation.

In the area of radiation protection, Slovakia has contributed significantly to the strengthening of international cooperation by taking steps necessary for the ratification of the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management. Following the adoption of resolution GC(41)/RES/11 at the forty-first IAEA General Conference, the National Council of the Slovak Republic has expressed its approval of the Joint Convention and we expect to deposit the instruments of ratification with the Director General of the IAEA by the end of 1998.

With respect to resolution GC(41)/RES/21, the Slovak Government decided in July this year to participate in and support the international initiative for the Chernobyl sarcophagus. Slovakia will contribute to the Shelter Implementation Plan the amount of 2 million ECU, and this contribution will be pledged despite the budgetary difficulties and the natural disasters which have occurred in Slovakia this year.

Mr. Squadron (United States of America): On behalf of the United States, I would like to commend the Director General for his report. We note with appreciation his outstanding performance this past year as the new Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in support of the IAEA's important contributions to international peace and prosperity.

Over the years, the IAEA has been committed to a diverse set of programmes that enhance the security, the health, the environment and the safety of the international community. It has done so with distinction. The IAEA's achievements reflected in the Director General's report demonstrate the critical role of the Agency in encouraging cooperation in the many important peaceful uses of nuclear material and technology under sound non-proliferation conditions.

The Agency's safeguards system performs the essential function of verifying compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and other non-proliferation treaties. The United States reaffirms the importance of the Model Additional Protocol approved on 15 May 1997, and is proud to have been the first nuclear-weapon State to sign the additional protocol. The United States strongly supports continued efforts to bring the agreed new safeguards measures into effect as quickly and as widely as possible.

Strengthening nuclear safety continues to be a central goal of the IAEA. The Department of Nuclear Safety works effectively with other elements of the Agency and the member States to ensure that safety remains a priority in the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The Agency's extensive training programmes promote safety. Operational safety review teams and other safety services provided by the IAEA to its member States offer top quality advice and help to focus the Agency's safety assistance and technical cooperation programmes where they are most needed. The Convention on Nuclear Safety, for which the IAEA serves as Secretariat, embodies the commitment of its signatories to safety. The United States reaffirms its strong support for the IAEA's work in nuclear safety throughout the world and our commitment to strengthen further these important activities.

The United States would also like to commend the Agency's continued efforts to implement the Security Council resolutions in regard to Iraq. The United States strongly urges Iraq to rescind its 5 August decision to suspend cooperation with the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and the IAEA. As stated in the 14 May Security Council presidential statement, Iraq must answer all of the IAEA's remaining questions and concerns before the Council will endorse a transition to long-term monitoring. In particular, as required under Security Council resolution 715 (1991), Iraq should pass penal legislation prohibiting activity contrary to Security Council resolution 687 (1991).

The United States is concerned about the lack of cooperation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with the IAEA. We encourage that country to work with the Agency to take all steps deemed necessary by the IAEA to monitor the Agreed Framework. We also encourage the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to

take steps now — such as steps to preserve information — which will help facilitate the IAEA's task of verifying that country's initial declarations at the appropriate time under the Agreed Framework. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abide by the terms of the Agreed Framework and to take no action which could be perceived as undermining its commitment to the Framework.

The United States commends the IAEA's programme for combating illicit trafficking in nuclear materials. Sixty countries presently participate in the Agency's illicit trafficking database, which demonstrates a strong interest in cooperative efforts in monitoring nuclear materials and other radioactive sources. We are grateful to the IAEA for its leadership in providing systematic and methodical analyses in this critical area. Additionally, since good physical protection is the best means to prevent illicit trafficking in nuclear material, we commend the Agency's efforts in working to improve physical protection guidelines and assisting States in implementing effective physical protection systems.

The United States wishes to reiterate its continued support for the IAEA's technical cooperation programme. As the major contributor to this valuable programme, we recognize its importance in promoting the quality of human life in many countries. The diverse projects undertaken by the technical cooperation programme and their many benefits provide the world with a better understanding of how nuclear materials can be used to help solve problems in medicine, health, agriculture and basic industry. This work helps to fulfil the vision of expanding the peaceful uses of nuclear material for the future.

On behalf of the Government of the United States, I would again like to thank Mr. ElBaradei for his report and note the superb beginning of his tenure. We look forward to our continued cooperation with the IAEA, recognizing fully the importance of this valuable asset to the security of the world and its people.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): The delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran notes with satisfaction the annual report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to the General Assembly for the year 1997, which summarizes the Agency's significant achievements during that period. We thank Mr. ElBaradei, the Director General of the IAEA, for his thorough and informative statement featuring the main developments in the activities of the Agency during 1997.

The Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great importance to international cooperation in the peaceful application of nuclear energy, and has pursued with great interest the promotional role of the Agency in this field. My delegation appreciates the useful technical cooperation the Agency extends to Member States in the field of agriculture, industry, medicine and other related areas, such as water desalination. In this regard, the importance of sustained funding, particularly through voluntary contributions, for the Agency's technical assistance programs needs to be highlighted. The fact that the Agency's Technical Cooperation Fund is not based on predictable and assured resources is a matter of concern for all developing countries.

Exceptional cases of violation of IAEA safeguards in the recent past, however, have provided an excuse for certain nuclear-weapon States and some other industrialized countries to undermine the statutory tasks and obligations of the Agency towards the developing countries and to infringe more than before upon the rights of the parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) with regard to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Such policies are pursued for political gain and are against the interests and needs of even those developing countries that are certified by IAEA inspections for their peaceful nuclear energy programmes and that have pursued an open-door policy regarding the IAEA inspections.

Parties to the NPT, as the Treaty stipulates, have the right to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. This right should be ensured by member States, and not violated. Not only should access to nuclear energy be unimpeded, but preferential treatment should be provided, in conformity with the Treaty. This, of course, does not prevent any State from raising concerns about possible mischief by any other State. But this should not be arbitrary and unilateral. The IAEA is the competent authority to address such concerns. The parties to the NPT, in fact, reaffirmed their acceptance of this authority and agreed that their concerns should be submitted to the IAEA with supporting evidence. They further agreed that the IAEA should examine these concerns and make its conclusions on the issue. Therefore, the States that decide not to cooperate with any member of the NPT whose compliance with the provisions of the Treaty has been verified by the IAEA fail in their solemn undertaking to facilitate the fullest exchange of equipment, material and scientific and technological information for peaceful uses of nuclear energy, to which the Treaty binds them. It was

also stressed at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference that such facilities must be provided to all States parties, without discrimination.

Regarding implementation of the protocol additional to safeguards agreements, my Government firmly believes that this protocol should be applied equally and in a non-discriminatory manner to nuclear facilities and activities of all States members of the Agency, and in particular nuclear-weapon States. The universality of the new safeguards system is an effective way to ensure the compliance of all States that have assumed obligations under the NPT and the Statute of the IAEA.

We commend the efforts of the Agency in enhancing nuclear safety and radiation protection. We firmly believe that the scope of such measures should be expanded to all regions that operate nuclear installations, as the risks to life, health, environment and security emanating from such installations are not confined by national boundaries.

In this context, the continued operation of the unsafeguarded and entirely non-peaceful nuclear facilities in Israel is a source of great concern to the Middle Eastern countries. The refusal of Israel, the sole non-party in the Middle East to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to place its nuclear facilities under the comprehensive safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency, has defeated all efforts aimed at the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. My delegation welcomes the final communiqué of the twenty-fifth session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in March 1998, which *inter alia*, called upon the Security Council to obtain Israel's renunciation of nuclear armament, and to submit a full report on its stockpile of nuclear weapons and ammunition to the Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency. We also commend the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) recommendation in this respect, as well as the recent decision of the General Conference of the IAEA at its forty-second session to restore an item to its agenda at its forty-third session on Israel's nuclear capabilities and threat. We call upon the international community, and in particular the IAEA, to address this issue urgently and effectively.

As to the issue of the revision of article VI of the Statute of the Agency on the composition of the Board of Governors, we did not see any positive development in the year under review. The issue is simple: Africa and the Middle East and South Asian group of countries have been under-represented in the Board of Governors for decades, and their legitimate proposal to amend article VI of the Statute aimed at making the composition of the Board proportionate to an increased membership of the Agency has not resulted in concrete action. The issue has been complicated in recent years by an unacceptable procedure that has allowed the genuine and long-standing proposal of countries located in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia to become hostage to a package approach calling for a review of the composition of the Middle East and South Asian region. We are convinced that the composition of any geographical grouping of the Agency can be decided only by members of that grouping and should not be dictated from outside.

In conclusion, allow me once again to extend our appreciation and support to the IAEA for its efforts in promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects. We hope that the IAEA, under the new leadership, will continue to promote its lofty objectives into the next century.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I would like to congratulate Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), on his excellent leadership and the effective manner in which he is organizing the work of the Agency. I would like to thank Mr. ElBaradei for his comprehensive statement, made earlier today. The long experience that he has had with the Agency will, I am sure, help in achieving the statutory goals and objectives of the IAEA.

Pakistan is a founding member of the International Atomic Energy Agency. We remain firmly committed to its statutory goals and objectives. Pakistan takes justifiable pride in its close cooperation and partnership with the Agency over the past 40 years. We have benefited greatly from cooperation with the Agency in areas ranging from nuclear medicine to nuclear safety. Pakistan's impeccable record in terms of nuclear safety and safeguards, its participation in the Agency's promotional activities and its active role in the IAEA's policy-making organs reflect our abiding commitment to the promotion of peaceful uses of atomic energy.

Since energy is a vital input to the development process, energy consumption per capita is bound to increase sharply in developing countries. This increase in energy demand cannot be met by fossil fuels alone, since that would impose an unacceptable burden on the environment. The massive development of hydropower is one option. The only other proven and sustainable option

is nuclear energy. Despite Chernobyl, the safety record of the nuclear industry is unmatched by any other major enterprise. Opposition to nuclear power is thus based on misunderstanding or is a deliberate pretext to deny this technology to less-favoured nations.

Unfortunately, the growth of nuclear power in both industrialized and developing countries, has slowed during the last two decades, partly for economic reasons, but largely due to ill-informed decisions. There are, nevertheless, some positive signs. For example, there is renewed debate in some European countries regarding their previous decisions to abandon nuclear power. A number of Asian countries are committed to, or keenly interested in, nuclear power. The Agency must play an active role in strengthening the technical infrastructure of member States that are interested in the promotion of nuclear power. We feel that to address the financial requirements of such a supportive role by the Agency, the creation of a nuclear power fund deserves consideration.

Pakistan, which is deficient in fossil fuels, can greatly benefit from nuclear energy production. Although our initial ambitious IAEA-sponsored programme was made impossible by the post-1974 termination of peaceful and safeguarded nuclear cooperation by certain countries, Pakistan maintained and significantly enlarged its capabilities in the various elements of the nuclear fuel cycle. At present, we operate two research reactors and one power reactor, safely and effectively. We are grateful for the Agency's cooperation and assistance for safety upgrades of the Karachi Nuclear Power Plant (KANUPP) power reactor. The construction of the Chashma nuclear power plant, provided under IAEA safeguards by China, is proceeding satisfactorily. We gratefully acknowledge the valuable cooperation extended by the IAEA in various construction phases of the plant. We look forward to continued cooperation during the operational phase of the Chashma nuclear power plant and a planned second Chashma power reactor.

Technical cooperation is the backbone of the Agency's promotional activities. We wish to congratulate the Department of Technical Cooperation on attaining an all-time high implementation rate of 76.2 per cent in 1997, which is a tribute to the planning, management and diligence of the Department. At the same time, we are distressed that the Technical Cooperation Fund (TCF) target pledged during the year was an all-time low of 70.2 per cent, resulting in a sharp decline in the available TCF resources as compared to 1995 and 1996.

Pakistan accords the highest priority to safety in its nuclear facilities, and has benefited from the nuclear safety expertise available through the Agency. The recent entry into force of the international Convention on Nuclear Safety is a welcome step. We hope that the IAEA will now ensure the fullest possible exchange of safety-related information and the sharing of expertise. Pakistan, as a State party to the Nuclear Safety Convention, will continue to cooperate with the IAEA on this issue.

Implementation of nuclear safeguards agreements constitutes an important facet of the IAEA's activities. We are satisfied that during 1997 the IAEA's vast safeguards related activities, spreading over 900 facilities in some 70 countries and involving more than 10,000 person-days of inspection, show that the nuclear material and other items declared and placed under the Agency's safeguards remained in peaceful nuclear activities and were adequately accounted for. For its part, Pakistan has faithfully discharged its safeguards obligations under our agreements with the Agency of the INFCIRC/66 category.

Pakistan has noted the conclusion and approval by the Board of Governors of the protocol additional to safeguards agreements. The protocol is meant for countries which have INFCIRC/153-type safeguards agreements with the Agency. Suggestions to extend the programme to non-full-scope safeguards countries are contrary to the objectives and legal basis of the programme.

Among the technical agencies set up by the United Nations, the IAEA is undoubtedly an exemplary organization in its efficiency and professionalism. It is important that the Agency maintain its focus on its technical and promotional character. Unfortunately, over the past few years, there has been an inordinate shift towards the verification rather than the promotional role of the IAEA. Political issues and debates have been taking up an increasing proportion of the time and effort of the Secretariat and its policy-making organs. This trend needs to be reversed and the balance established in the IAEA's statute restored. Safeguards are, of course, one of the basic functions of the Agency. We remain supportive of the cost-effective implementation of safeguards in accordance with treaties or agreements voluntarily entered into by States. However, safeguards are not an end in themselves. They are designed to create an enabling environment for the promotion of the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

The regulatory responsibility of the Agency should not lead to the imposition of arbitrary restrictions on the transfer of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. Unfortunately, restrictions have been imposed, even when it is evident that no proliferation dangers are involved. At times, even safety-related information has been refused. This approach is not conducive to the evolution of safer techniques and methods, or to the promotion of greater openness and transparency in the field of nuclear technology. Since these are the key objectives of the Agency, we hope that the IAEA will redouble its efforts for their achievement. The International Atomic Energy Agency should strive to remove all impediments to the transfer of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

We expect the Agency to adopt non-discriminatory measures in providing access to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The Agency's primary purpose is to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear power under technically safe conditions, not to serve as a nuclear policeman or the arm for non-proliferation crusaders.

In this context, Pakistan regrets that certain members forced a discussion of nuclear testing in South Asia into the proceedings of the last IAEA General Conference. We have witnessed this polemical injection in certain statements made here as well. The IAEA's technical expertise and highly professional repute will suffer from recourse to such politically motivated moves. Pakistan opposed the proposals to criticize our nuclear tests of last May. We have explained that Pakistan was compelled to demonstrate its nuclear capacity in response to India's earlier tests in order to maintain the credibility of nuclear deterrence which has existed in undeclared form for over two decades in South Asia. Clearly, this issue is sought to be utilized by some States to divert attention away from the priority goal of nuclear disarmament. Ironically, these Powers, and their faithful allies that had sponsored the IAEA decision to criticize the South Asian tests, themselves felt obliged to abstain in the vote on this decision because of the adoption of an amendment urging progress towards nuclear disarmament. This unfortunate episode not only marred the proceedings of the IAEA General Conference; it revealed clearly the source of the real problem which confronts the promotion of peaceful nuclear energy — the crass discrimination practised by the major nuclear Powers and their military alliance partners. We hope that such partisan political games will no longer be played in the IAEA.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) *(interpretation from Arabic):* I should like to extend my thanks to the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, for the excellent manner in which he presented the report of the Agency this year. I wish also to congratulate him — an able Egyptian diplomat — on the great achievements he has made in the course of the short period since he took office. May I also express our gratitude to and recognition of Mr. Hans Blix, the previous Director General, for the great service he rendered over the year. These services contributed to strengthening the work of the Agency.

We have studied the annual report of the Agency. Egypt attaches great importance to the safeguards regime of the IAEA to control and monitor the peaceful uses of nuclear power by halting the diversion of nuclear energy to military use, through a set of rules and inspection criteria to be applied by the Agency, including the verification activities of 1997.

Despite the fact that the Agency's efforts in the field of verification and compliance and the fact that its Board of Governors adopted in May 1997 what is known as the 93+2 system, which provides the legal basis required for strengthening the Agency's ability to detect undeclared nuclear material and activities, there is a nuclear programme at the eastern borders of Egypt not subjected to these safeguards. This creates a very dangerous situation for the whole region, and threatens it with disastrous consequences unless the Agency and the international community endeavour to avert such a disaster. Despite international alarm vis-à-vis the latest developments in South Asia, those developments should not lessen the gravity of the situation in the Middle East. This is due to Israel's non-accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and its refusal to subject its nuclear facilities to the Agency's comprehensive safeguards. This calls for intensive international efforts, both at the United Nations and at the Agency, to compel Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to subject all its nuclear facilities to the Agency's comprehensive safeguards, as a natural beginning of a Middle East free of nuclear weapons. In this context, Egypt encourages the Agency to take tenacious, vigorous steps to pave the way for appropriate regional arrangements to make the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone, an initiative we have supported since 1974.

There is no doubt that the workshop on safeguards and verification technology, held in May 1998 in response to a request made by Egypt at the forty-first session of the General Conference, reflects the Agency's ongoing implementation of its decision regarding the

application of safeguards in the Middle East. The agenda of the workshop was somewhat disappointing, as it focused on general and technical aspects of verification without providing direction to such activities or even linking them to the Middle East, which diverted the attention of the workshop from its main objectives. In spite of that, the convening of the workshop and other similar activities specifically orienting them to address areas of disagreement can advance the application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East. Hence the Agency should continue to convene such meetings and should rationalize their agendas with a view to reaching the desired goals.

With these considerations in mind, Egypt holds a position of principle on the question of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, based on our conviction that removing the danger of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is the way to achieve real peace in that region. It would also serve the interests of all its peoples and would enhance good-neighbourliness and regional peace and security. It would undoubtedly be an important measure to build confidence among the States of the region.

I refer here to the April 1990 initiative of President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak to rid the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction, and to his June 1998 announcement of a more comprehensive initiative: to rid the entire world of weapons of mass destruction in view of the threat posed by such weapons and the need to enhance international peace and security. President Mubarak also called for the convening of an international conference with the purpose of reaching that goal within a defined time-frame. Egypt will work to give timely effect to these initiatives.

The Agency has made an enormous effort to transfer peaceful nuclear technologies to developing countries through its technical cooperation programme with its member States. In that connection, we have studied the Agency's 1997 report as it relates to such technical cooperation activities. Egypt attaches great importance to non-proliferation, within the framework of various Agency activities, and considers that technical cooperation complements the Agency's activities and enhances its credibility. It is also part and parcel of the Agency's efforts to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and, consequently, the efforts of the international community to curb the non-peaceful uses of that energy. In that connection, I note our concern at the crisis in implementing the Agency's technical cooperation programme, and therefore appeal to donor States to give this matter particular attention in order to strengthen the role of the Agency in technical cooperation for peaceful purposes.

Let me turn now to the Agency's activities with respect to Iraq. I shall refer here to the most recent status report of the Director General of the Agency, Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, to the Security Council. In this context, I reiterate our firm position on this matter: Iraq must cooperate fully both with the Agency and with the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM). This would make it possible to close the file of weapons prohibited under part C of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) by the terms of paragraph 22 of that resolution. That would help towards lifting the sanctions that have been imposed on Iraq for more than seven years and that have inflicted harsh human suffering on the Iraqi people. The report of the Director General clearly states that

(*spoke in English*)

> "There are no indications that there remains in Iraq any physical capability for the production of weapon-usable nuclear material of any practical significance." (*S/1998/694, annex, appendix, enclosure I, para. 77*)

(*spoke in Arabic*)

Those words are self-explanatory. It is perfectly clear and perfectly logical that without Iraq's cooperation the Agency would not have been able to arrive at that degree of certainty in its conclusion. It is time for the entire nuclear file to be moved to the status of ongoing monitoring and verification.

There is another topic I wish to address today, even though it does not fall within the framework of the report of the Agency. It goes, however, to the essence of the Agency's work and its ability to contend with the changing international political scene. I refer to amending article VI of the statute of the Agency, which relates to expanding the membership of the Board of Governors. On several occasions Egypt has stressed that it is a matter of urgency to expand the Board so that it can reflect the great increase in the membership of the Agency. If this is done, it will strengthen the administrative, technical and political authority of the Board of Governors in adopting decisions that command the broadest possible acceptance by the international community. Highlighting this issue, the IAEA General Conference has adopted a resolution noting that Africa, the Middle East and South

Asia were under-represented on the Board, and that this matter should be redressed. Expansion of the Board of Governors is a matter of urgency and of increasing importance; it would contribute to an increase of benefits to developing countries and to their wider participation in the work of the Agency. This would have a positive impact on the performance of the Agency itself. It would be best to settle this matter in a comprehensive and just manner so as to avoid reverting to the subject of Board expansion again in the future.

Egypt's election to membership of the Board of Governors at the forty-second session of the General Conference highlights the active role my country plays in the field of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. During its tenure, Egypt will continue to work energetically to enhance the endeavours and activities of the Agency for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and for making them available to developing countries through the technical cooperation programme of the Agency.

Mr. Abelian (Armenia): Let me begin by expressing my Government's gratitude for the important work carried out by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) during 1997 and during the first part of 1998. We commend the Director General, Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, and the Agency's secretariat and other staff for their commitment and professionalism in carrying out an extensive programme under resource constraints.

We are confident that under the leadership of Mr. ElBaradei, whose vast experience and skills are well known to us all, the Agency will make significant progress towards its two main objectives — the promotion of the peaceful use of nuclear energy and safeguarding against the use of nuclear material for military purposes.

We welcome the report of the IAEA to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, as it provides us with a valuable opportunity to review the Agency's activities and to evaluate their impact in the areas which the Agency is actively engaged in.

Since its establishment, the IAEA has worked to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy. It has played and continues to play a crucial role in expanding cooperation among member States to this end. The IAEA's role as a central medium for the transfer and application of nuclear technology has contributed to the economic development of member States. We fully support the Agency's view that encouraging nuclear technology transfer for exclusively peaceful purposes is an integral part of the international consensus relating to the peaceful use of nuclear energy that is embodied in the IAEA statute and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Armenia's policy with respect to nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction is clear and consistent. It is based on a serious and genuine commitment to the objectives and principles of non-proliferation. In order to further ensure the implementation of the NPT, States parties must continue to abide by the safeguards system of the IAEA. Armenia supports the strengthening and improvement of the effectiveness of the safeguards regime by introducing the protocol additional to safeguards agreements based on the text of the Model Protocol approved by the IAEA Board of Governors in 1997. We are proud to state that Armenia has become the first State with an operating power plant to sign the protocol additional to its safeguards agreement.

Encouraging an increasing number of States committed to non-proliferation to sign the protocol would serve two purposes: one, to subject the portion of the world's nuclear fuel cycle currently under the Agency's comprehensive safeguards to a further strengthened system of safeguards; and, two, to exert requisite influence on the States which are prone to pursuing undeclared nuclear activities, with a view to their eventual adoption of this new norm.

Armenia attaches great importance to cooperation in the field of peaceful energy use and nuclear safety. In this context, I am pleased to announce that during the forty-second General Conference the delegation of Armenia deposited Armenia's instrument of ratification of the Convention on Nuclear Safety. Nuclear safety is a fundamental issue. Universal recognition of the importance of implementing the provisions of the Convention at national, regional and international levels will promote and maintain the highest standards of safety. It is in the interests of us all that those States that have not yet signed and ratified the Convention do so at the earliest possible date. We also look forward to actively participating in the first Review Meeting of the Convention in April 1999.

Armenia considers the IAEA as a key partner in developing its programme of peaceful nuclear energy. The IAEA has made a significant contribution to the reactivation of one of the units of the Medzamor nuclear power plant. We would also like to commend the Agency for its ongoing assistance in ensuring the plant's safe

operation. The IAEA's assistance in enhancing the seismic safety of the Medzamor nuclear power plant is of special importance to us. As a national coordinator of technical cooperation programmes, the National Regulatory Authority oversees the activities of Armenia's agencies and organizations that are engaged in projects under the auspices of the IAEA. Under the technical cooperation programme, Armenia is currently implementing eight national and nine regional projects that are aimed in particular at the strengthening of the safety of the Medzamor nuclear power plant.

Armenia and the IAEA are working together on the elaboration of the technical cooperation programme for 1999-2000. We continue to view the IAEA technical cooperation programme as an integral part of the Agency's activities contributing to sustainable development. We hope that the donor States will continue to make contributions to the Technical Cooperation Fund in order to further assist the newly independent States in strengthening their national infrastructures, training the specialists required for the safe utilization of nuclear energy and bringing their operational standards into compliance with the current requirements of the IAEA.

Armenia values cooperation with IAEA member States. Under the aegis of the IAEA, Armenia is expanding cooperation with the Russian Federation, the United States, the member States of the European Union — particularly France and Germany — and with Argentina and Slovakia, as well as other partner countries. Cooperation with our partners includes implementation of joint projects on nuclear safety research and sustainable development, exchange of technical information, improvement of operational safety standards and radiation protection at nuclear power plants, seismic safety and the training of technical personnel.

We are concerned about the possible negative impact of nuclear tests in South Asia on the international non-proliferation regime. We are pleased to hear that no further nuclear tests are planned and that both States have shown their intention to accede to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), thereby enabling the Treaty to enter into force. We are convinced that the entry into force of the CTBT and the successful conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty will greatly enhance international peace and security.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the Director General of my country's full cooperation in his work to further the goals of the IAEA. We hope that draft resolution A/53/L.18, of which Armenia is a sponsor, will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Valle (Brazil) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the delegations of the member countries of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — and the delegations of the associated States of Bolivia and Chile, we wish to express our satisfaction with the report submitted by the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei.

We would once again like to highlight the importance we attach to the International Atomic Energy Agency as the promoter of the use of nuclear energy for exclusively peaceful purposes and its key role in the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, whose progress should further extend the tasks of the Agency in the not too distant future. Similarly, the member and associated countries of MERCOSUR would again like to reiterate our full commitment to the safeguards regime applied and administered by the IAEA.

In this regard, we welcome the growing and positive interaction between the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) and the IAEA, recently reflected in the technical cooperation agreement signed by both Agencies in May 1998. We also deem it worth recalling that Argentina and Brazil have offered to share with other countries their experience in creating and setting up the ABACC as a contribution to the international non-proliferation regime.

In this context, we are pleased with the conclusion of the agreement on cooperation for the promotion of nuclear science and technology in Latin America, a specific instrument to multilaterally channel cooperation for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in the Latin American region. Likewise, we look forward with interest to the conclusions of the senior group of experts on the possible courses of action for the general programme and priorities of the Agency in the future, which will be considered by the Board of Governors at their meeting next March.

In conclusion, the member and associate countries of MERCOSUR wish once again to highlight the laudable work carried out by the Agency in applying safeguards and in international cooperation. We also wish to reiterate our thanks for the full report made available to us for our consideration.

Mr. Dausá Céspedes (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Before I delve into the subject of concern today, allow me to express Cuba's deepest condolences and full solidarity at the loss of life and property in the fraternal Central American countries as a result of the scourge of Hurricane Mitch.

I should like at the outset to thank the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for his report.

Cuba sees as positive the modest yet tangible advances achieved in the area of technical cooperation by the IAEA in recent years, including the efforts carried out by the Agency's Department of Technical Cooperation Department to increase its effectiveness and efficiency.

Development, promotion and technical cooperation activities should not only be maintained but strengthened on a yearly basis because they form the cornerstone of the Agency's raison d'être. Our experience of the past 40 years and of the past few decades in particular has made clear the limitless possibilities offered by the appropriate use of nuclear technology. These include much higher-yielding or disease-resistant plant varieties, pathogen-free food and more efficient methods for diagnosing widespread illnesses, to mention but a few.

Cuba, as many other countries, has benefited from technical cooperation with the IAEA. We continue also to make a practical contribution to furthering that cooperation. We have provided experts to other countries in various areas; we have made our facilities available for the training of foreign specialists; and certain Cuban products have even been used in international cooperation projects in the area of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Cuba is concerned at the positions taken by some developed countries that are aimed at minimizing the importance of cooperation issues and even reducing their contributions to the IAEA Technical Cooperation Fund. The annual report of the Agency for 1997, which the Assembly will take note of today, reflects the difficult situation faced in the past year regarding funding to implement the planned cooperation programme. The figures for the 1999-2000 biennium do not cover actual needs, and it has not even been possible to determine approximate figures for the 2000-2001 biennium.

A priority challenge for the Agency in the immediate future must be the adoption of a comprehensive and effective programme to strengthen technical cooperation similar to the one adopted to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of safeguards.

We in the Latin American and Caribbean region welcome the entry into force of the governmental agreement to support the programme on Regional Cooperative Arrangements for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America (ARCAL). Cuba is pleased that preparations for this agreement took place at the meeting of the leading nuclear authorities of the member countries of ARCAL, held in Havana last year.

Despite the strong rejection expressed by many States for activities of this kind, unfortunately there are countries that are not even concerned with the most fundamental principles of international coexistence and that attempt to manipulate international agencies based on narrow political interests. Last week the Government of the United States adopted an omnibus bill on appropriations, of which two full sections — 2809 and 2810 — are devoted entirely to detailing various ways to boycott the Cuban nuclear programmes, and in particular cooperation between the IAEA and Cuba. Those sections also provide for a reduction in assistance funds for third countries commensurate with the resources they supply to Cuba's nuclear programme, despite the fact that it has strictly peaceful purposes. Actions of this nature are reprehensible and are categorically rejected by my country.

Cuba recognizes the efforts made to strengthen the IAEA safeguards regime, which culminated in the adoption of the Model Additional Protocol last year. We hope that the Agency will continue to advance along this difficult path, taking due note of the legitimate concerns of States and rigorously ensuring that safeguards activities do not become an unacceptable financial burden for developing countries.

In this context, I wish to reiterate my country's serious reservations as to the non-proliferation regime based on the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which some attempt to use as a model. Cuba believes that the NPT is a selective and discriminatory non-proliferation regime that establishes different categories of States with different rights and obligations. Paradoxically, in accordance with this Treaty non-nuclear-weapon States must comply with strict verification requirements that do not apply to the nuclear-weapon States. These are the

reasons of principle that have kept my country from signing the NPT.

A firm commitment to nuclear disarmament and commitment to the use of nuclear energy for strictly peaceful purposes will continue to be basic principles of Cuba's foreign policy.

As a fresh gesture of goodwill, the Government of Cuba has decided to initiate talks with the secretariat of the IAEA to consider the possibility of incorporating in our safeguards agreements with the Agency some of the measures that have been contemplated in the Model Additional Protocol.

Once again, controversial wording on specific countries or situations has been included in the draft resolution on the report of the IAEA. It is disturbing that this has become the practice in recent years, despite the fact that this procedure does not have the support of all delegations. Since this Agency is of such great importance for the international community, the text submitted to the General Assembly on the work of the IAEA should reflect those issues that receive consensus support from delegations, as is the case for other texts adopted on other bodies or forums.

We hope that in future these concerns will duly be taken into account, and we take this opportunity to express our position of unanimous support for the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mr. Reva (Ukraine): On behalf of the Ukrainian delegation, I would like to thank Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), for his comprehensive introduction of the Agency's report to the Assembly and also congratulate him on the assumption of his very important position. We wish him every success in further promoting the noble goals of the IAEA.

Since its establishment more than 40 years ago, the IAEA has made a unique contribution to promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to setting international standards for nuclear safety and the management of radioactive wastes. Thanks to its technical cooperation programmes, know-how on nuclear applications in such diverse areas as agriculture, health, industry and water-resources management has become available to a growing number of countries. Today the Agency continues to play an indispensable role in strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

However, recent developments in the sphere of non-proliferation cannot but cause legitimate concern to the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regarding the viability of the non-proliferation regime, and necessitate concerted action by them to further strengthen this regime. Therefore, Ukraine welcomes the recent accessions to the Treaty and appeals to those few States that remain outside the NPT to accede to it as soon as possible.

The safeguards systems are an integral element of the non-proliferation regime, and our goal should be the application of strengthened safeguards in all States. Ukraine ratified the comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA on 17 December 1997.

We also believe that the new Model Protocol Additional to Safeguards Agreements will provide the Agency with stronger tools to verify compliance with the NPT. We are continuing to work in order to conclude the additional protocol as soon as possible.

The role of the IAEA in the field of nuclear and radiation safety is indisputable. Ukraine notes with satisfaction the Agency's efforts to enhance the safety of nuclear power plants in Central and Eastern Europe. It is quite obvious that this is a long-term task, but we should pursue it with no less determination than any other.

On 7 July 1998 the Vienna Convention on Nuclear Safety entered into force in Ukraine. As per its commitments, my country has transmitted to the States parties for their consideration the national report on Ukraine's fulfilment of its obligations under the Convention. We attach particular importance to the Convention's first review meeting, which will take place next spring.

Ukraine's delegation notes with satisfaction our country's broadening technical cooperation with the IAEA, which embraces basic activities in the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We are also satisfied with the progress on implementation of technical assistance projects in Ukraine as well as with the broad involvement of our representatives in the Agency's regional technical assistance projects. All these projects are of great practical importance for our country.

The problem of the safety of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant continues to remain a focus of attention for Ukraine's Government and the whole international community. In this respect, let me briefly inform the

Assembly about the progress achieved in implementing the memorandum of understanding between the G-7, the European Commission and Ukraine that was signed in Ottawa in December 1995.

Unit 1 of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant was shut down in 1996. The preparation work for extracting the nuclear fuel from this unit is now under way. We also attach special attention to the work on the shelter construction over destroyed unit 4 within the framework of the memorandum.

In this regard, my delegation highly appreciates the decisions of the pledging conference convened last year here in New York. We are grateful to the G-7 Governments, the European Commission and Governments of other donor States, including most recently the Government of the Slovak Republic, for their pledges for the realization of the shelter implementation plan.

The decisions of the pledging conference have given a strong impetus to the practical steps aimed at the fulfilment of the memorandum. In this context, I also wish to mention that the framework agreement between Ukraine and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) relating to the activities of the Chernobyl shelter fund in Ukraine has been signed and has entered into force. The structure of the fund has been shaped, the mechanism for payments developed and the governing board of the project management unit elected, and tenders on certain groups of projects are in progress.

Presently, more than $390 million have been pledged to the Chernobyl shelter fund, and some $200 million have already been credited to the relevant EBRD account. However, $750 million are still needed to complete the shelter implementation plan. In this respect, we hope that these funds will be collected at the second pledging conference.

The memorandum provides that the completion of construction of compensatory power units is among the preconditions for the decommissioning of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. The delay in putting into operation the units at the Rivne and Khmel'nitskiy nuclear power plants is of particular concern to our Government. In view of the present situation, we must also state that Ukraine will be able to complete these energy units only on the condition that the G-7 and the European Community member States take appropriate emergency steps aimed at securing the necessary financial resources for this purpose. Otherwise, the failure of the achieved agreements regarding Chernobyl would produce a negative reaction both in Ukraine and in other States, as well as adversely affecting our common cause of the safe utilization of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Only by joint efforts will we be able to eliminate the Chernobyl problem.

The International Atomic Energy Agency is widely regarded as a model organization. We are confident that the initiative of the Director General to set up a senior expert group to look at all aspects of the Agency's activities will strengthen this view. We believe that the IAEA can look forward to the new millennium with optimism. I wish to conclude by reiterating Ukraine's commitment to the Agency's goals.

Mr. Sychou (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): Our delegation would like to express its gratitude to the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. ElBaradei, for the Agency's annual report on its activities.

Since its establishment, the IAEA has been called upon to deal successfully with such important international challenges as ensuring nuclear safety and organizing technical assistance to States so that they can develop nuclear research programmes. The Agency has made a significant contribution to dealing successfully with these challenges and has shown itself to be a reliable international organization which promotes the strengthening of inter-State cooperation on issues pertaining to the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

Achieving comprehensive compliance with the principles of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is one of the main priorities of our Government's foreign policy. In this connection, we should add that Belarus attaches great significance to IAEA activities in this area.

Belarus is taking consistent steps towards becoming a non-nuclear State. It has ratified the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms and has adhered to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear State. It has signed a safeguards agreement with the IAEA. Another important milestone for Belarus in this regard was the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

At the end of April 1992 Belarus withdrew tactical nuclear weapons, ahead of schedule, from its territory, and in 1996 the Republic complied with the timetable for the withdrawal of nuclear strategic weapons. In this way,

the entire space of Central and Eastern Europe has been freed of nuclear weapons.

In this connection, we see it as essential to establish a non-nuclear space in Central Europe, which would enable us to consolidate the already existing non-nuclear obligations of States in the region and prevent the possibility of a new geographical spread of weapons of mass destruction.

The term "space" lends some flexibility to that idea. We believe that the "non-nuclear space" could be based on a balanced combination of legal and political, multilateral and unilateral obligations of States. It could have the participation of such countries as those which link their security to membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as well as neutral States. To some extent, those members of NATO having a special position with regard to nuclear weapons could join in this space.

We would especially like to emphasize that the only objective of this initiative was to find solutions to questions on the establishment and strengthening of pan-European security, and consequently international security. In this connection, the interests of all European States and security structures will be taken into account.

Belarus attaches great significance to the strengthening of the international safeguards system and is making every effort to strictly comply with the obligations it has entered into to ensure reliable protection for nuclear materials. The donor countries — the United States of America, Japan and Sweden — with coordination from the International Atomic Energy Agency, are lending Belarus significant technical assistance in establishing and improving on the Government's system of accounting and monitoring of nuclear materials.

Measurement systems have been established which allow us not only to take stock of nuclear materials but also to carry out studies and monitor transit of materials through the territory of the Republic. Like the majority of other States, Belarus is participating in the implementation of the first part of the Programme 93 + 2, giving the Agency a larger scope of information on nuclear activities and ensuring access for inspectors.

In 1997 the IAEA prepared the protocol additional to the safeguards agreement. Currently, Belarusian experts are undertaking a detailed study of the protocol. The need for such in-depth study is conditioned by the complexities of such tasks as providing sensitive information, which, in the final analysis, might affect the sovereignty of our State. At the same time, we would like to emphasize that many of the steps provided for in the protocol require individual consultations with interested States. By way of example, I could talk about agreed upon problems involving a breakdown analysis of nuclear material samples and swabs from hot chambers.

Belarus has seen from its own experience that any accident at a nuclear power plant is trans-border in nature. At the same time, we should take into account the fact that our Republic has nuclear power stations on its borders as well. In this context, recognizing the role and significance of the amended Protocol to the Vienna Convention, as worked out by the IAEA in respect to civil liability for nuclear damage, our country, having signed this Protocol, has taken yet another step in supporting closer international cooperation in the nuclear sphere at the political and industrial levels.

I would also like to point out that currently the President of the Republic of Belarus is studying another important document to strengthen the safeguards regime: the Convention on Nuclear Safety. Our Government attaches great importance to ensuring maximum radiation safety for the population of the country — which on a daily basis has to cope with the painful consequences of the Chernobyl accident.

Various steps are being taken to strengthen all aspects of radiation safety. In January 1998 a law was adopted on radiation safety for the population. This law sets out the rights and obligations of citizens subjected to radiation for medical purposes, as well as the rights and obligations of citizens exposed to radon, a natural source of radiation.

In addition, a draft law has been put forward for the consideration of the Belarus Parliament on the use of atomic energy and on radiation protection, a law which, among other things, covers such subjects as material responsibility borne by those using sources of ionizing radiation.

One of the priority areas in the activities of our State in ensuring radiation safety for the population is solving the problem of the safety of waste, a problem which emerged in the initial period following the accident at Chernobyl. Work has been concluded on modernizing and certifying the facilities for the maintenance and preservation of waste, and also to define the radionuclide components of nuclear waste. In this connection, the

IAEA's project, "Rehabilitation of EKORES radioactive waste disposal facility", is an important initiative.

Belarus notes with satisfaction the significant expansion of its relations with the IAEA in the area of technical cooperation in recent years. The policy of improving approaches of the Agency in its lending of technical assistance — taking into account national interests of States and the quality of the choice of projects chosen for their orientation towards the final user — significantly enhances the effectiveness of these plans. The Republic of Belarus supported the initiative of the IAEA on the joint realization of a pilot project to improve the infrastructure for radiation safety and waste management, and is pleased at the course of its implementation.

The involvement in this project of the plans to protect the population from ionized radiation of other countries in the region gives the project a regional nature, something which can serve as an additional impulse for development of bilateral contacts of States of the region in this area.

One important example of close and effective cooperation between Belarus and the IAEA is the implementation in Belarus of the project on the cultivation of rapeseed oil in radionuclide-contaminated areas. Economic gains produced by this initially small-scale project compelled Belarus and the IAEA to conclude an agreement in 1997 on the cultivation of rapeseed and the production of biolubricants from rapeseeds.

The cleaning up of the lands affected by the Chernobyl accident, and the commercial effect of the products which have been cultivated, involve a combination of humanitarian, economic and commercial interests. Another example of active cooperation with the IAEA is the project to modernize and enhance the quality of radioactive metrology and standardization, in the course of which we plan to establish a system of accreditation and certification, as well as secondary standards.

In the near future, major priorities for Belarus, along with the matters I have mentioned, remain the development of cooperation with the IAEA in improving nuclear medicine, the effective use of the territory affected by the Chernobyl catastrophe, and the establishment of a reliable system of emergency planning and operational reaction to nuclear accidents, in keeping with the spirit of the programme for sustainable development of our country in the next millennium.

In conclusion, the Belarusian delegation would like to express its positive view of the work of the Agency and support priority areas of its future activities. We express the hope that there will be close cooperation with the Agency in solving all problems pertaining to the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

Mr. Hughes (New Zealand): I shall be very brief. At the outset, I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, for his introduction of the Agency's report and for his skilled leadership of the Agency over the past year.

It is of great satisfaction to New Zealand that the Agency, under Mr. ElBaradei, continues to work in an efficient manner in support of nuclear non-proliferation, including through the extension of the IAEA safeguards system, and also in practical ways to enhance nuclear safety.

New Zealand regards the IAEA safeguards system as of paramount importance in fulfilling the IAEA's mission to ensure that nuclear energy is used exclusively for peaceful purposes. Having signed an additional protocol with the Agency during the General Conference in Vienna in September, New Zealand is now one of 33 countries to have concluded additional protocols to their original safeguards agreements. New Zealand's additional protocol came into effect immediately.

The safeguards system is also fundamental to the entire nuclear non-proliferation regime, which has as its cornerstone the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We reject strongly any suggestion that the Agency does not or should not have a role in countering nuclear proliferation.

New Zealand shares with many States the view that the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan constitute a severe threat to the nuclear non-proliferation regime and to the prospects for nuclear disarmament. New Zealand condemned these tests, as it has done in the case of all nuclear tests. Indications made recently in the General Assembly regarding signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) offer some encouragement, but we need deeds, not words, when it comes to international norms and non-proliferation. We urge India and Pakistan to stop their nuclear weapon development, to sign and ratify the

CTBT without delay and without condition, and to adhere to the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States.

It is clear that the IAEA must also continue to play a significant role in Iraq with a view to compiling the kind of clean bill of health that will enable that country to rejoin the international community. But it is equally evident that this will only happen with the full cooperation of Iraq. It is therefore of serious concern to New Zealand that the Director General has once again had to report that the Agency's inability to inspect new sites seriously weakens the ongoing monitoring and verification plan and the assurances the Agency is able to give. We support the unequivocal position taken by the Security Council in demanding that Iraq resume full cooperation with the IAEA and with the United Nations Special Commission.

It is New Zealand's view that the safeguards agreement between the IAEA and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains legally binding and in force. We noted with disappointment that the eleventh round of technical consultations held between the parties in October has again seen little progress. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to make available the information that is required to verify the completeness and correctness of its initial declaration.

New Zealand also commends the Director General for his willingness to plan ahead for the Agency's future. We regard such forward thinking as important, especially in the context of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on fissile materials early next year. New Zealand sees the Agency as having an integral part to play in the verification arrangements for such a new treaty and we will continue to take a keen interest in this and other aspects of the Agency's future work programme.

Finally, New Zealand remains a committed supporter of the Agency and its works, not all of which I have, of course, touched on today. We therefore offer the Director General and the draft resolution before us in document A/53/L.18 our full support.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I call on the representative of Slovenia to introduce a revision to draft resolution A/53/L.18.

Mr. Türk (Slovenia): On behalf of the sponsors, I have the honour to inform the members of the General Assembly of a revision to the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.18.

When introducing the draft resolution this morning, the sponsors were of the view that it accurately reflected the activities of the Agency in the year under review. The sponsors also believed that the content of the draft resolution was balanced and that the concerns of different members were duly taken care of.

However, the wish of the sponsors is to get the broadest possible support for the draft resolution. Therefore, we studied carefully the amendment to operative paragraph 7 of the draft resolution, proposed by the delegation of Iraq in document A/53/L.19. Following negotiations of cosponsors and interested delegations with the delegation of Iraq, the sponsors are now proposing a revision to operative paragraph 7.

The revision to operative paragraph 7 is as follows. In the last line of the paragraph, the word "few" should be inserted before the word "remaining". The last two lines of operative paragraph 7 will now read as follows:

> "and stresses that greater transparency by Iraq would contribute greatly to the resolution of the few remaining questions and concerns;".

The sponsors agreed on this revision on the understanding that the delegation of Iraq will withdraw its amendment, as contained in document A/53/L.19.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Iraq regarding the possible withdrawal of draft resolution A/53/L.19.

Mr. Al-Hitti (Iraq): In the spirit of compromise and in the light of the revision just made by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.18, and going along with the will of many delegations to reach a compromise text, my delegation will not insist on its amendment, contained in document A/53/L.19.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): As we have just heard, draft resolution A/53/L.19 has been withdrawn from consideration.

The following countries have joined the list of sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.18: Belarus, Bulgaria, El Salvador, Greece, Luxembourg, Monaco, New Zealand and San Marino.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/53/L.18, as orally revised. Before giving the floor to the speakers in explanation of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic on a point of order.

Mr. Abou-Hadid (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation appeals to you, Sir, as the President of the General Assembly, and in view of the fact that you are highly skilful politically and are a Foreign Minister, to take into account the fact that the draft resolution before us for decision, which was officially circulated to us only this morning, has political implications, and delegations need instructions from their capitals. I raise this question to appeal to you once again, Sir, to postpone any action on this draft resolution during this meeting so that we may refer it to our capitals and receive instructions. This will enable us not to ignore our responsibility for awaiting instructions from our capitals with regard to voting on this draft resolution. As you know, Sir, there were consultations until 3 p.m. today on amendments presented this morning. There was an amendment which is now before us. I request that in your political capacity you take this into consideration, and appeal to the sponsors to understand the importance of postponing any decision on the draft resolution.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has requested postponement of a decision on the draft resolution. Before deciding on this point, I call on the representative of Slovenia, who has asked for the floor.

Mr. Türk (Slovenia): Our delegation listened very carefully to the statement by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. Like other sponsors, we are aware of the political importance and sensitivity of the content of this draft resolution. On the other hand, we would recall that it was circulated last week; it was available to all delegations on Friday, 30 October following a period of extensive consultations in which all interested delegations had the opportunity to participate.

Furthermore, during the discussions this morning and the informal consultations which have taken place, the very constructive spirit which prevailed made it possible for the sponsors to agree with the author of the amendment to a formulation in paragraph 7, which is again a balanced and helpful arrangement. Therefore, we would most respectfully suggest that the sponsors of the draft resolution would very strongly prefer that action on it be taken now.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to remind representatives that rule 71 of the rules of procedures of the General Assembly provides that during the discussion of any matter a representative may rise to a point of order, and it shall be decided immediately by the President in accordance with the rules of procedure. A representative may appeal against the ruling of the President. The appeal shall be immediately put to the vote, and the President's ruling shall stand unless overruled by a majority of the members present and voting. A representative rising to a point of order may not speak on the substance of the matter under discussion.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): My delegation is fully aware of the rules of procedure referred to, and it is in this spirit that we take the floor to prepare the ground for your ruling, Mr. President, because if the ground is not level the presidency may in the future be interpreted as deterring discussion; while you have that authority to rule, delegations — as per the norms and tradition of this House — reserve the right to speak, so that when you make a ruling, Sir, you base it on views expressed from the floor.

With regard to the proposal made by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, I wish to echo the sentiments and views of the Slovenian delegation. I believe the amendment was circulated early enough to facilitate and conclude consultations, and, since the sponsors of paragraph 7 have arrived at a consensus decision, I humbly appeal to the Syrian delegation, in a spirit of fraternity, to afford us the latitude to take action on this draft resolution. I do so especially since the onus was on the Syrian delegation to take quick action, as soon as the draft resolution was circulated, to consult thoroughly with its capital. I am aware that it is a matter of delicacy, but at the same time consensus is always the soul of success, and thus the Syrian delegation, my greatest friends, should consider this of paramount importance.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Swaziland for his statement, from which I infer the possibility of calling on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic once again.

Mr. Abou-Hadid (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation has not tried to place any obstacles before the adoption of this draft resolution. The work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is commended by my delegation and my country and we appreciate the efforts made by the Agency and its Director General. I have listened attentively to the statement made by the Ambassador of Slovenia on the circulation of this draft resolution on Friday. We received it this morning, not on Friday. Once again we hope that the rules of procedure of the General Assembly will always be taken into consideration. You, Mr. President, are a depositary and a guardian of the rules of procedure. We respect your ruling. I also wish to extend my personal gratitude to the Ambassador of Swaziland.

We highly appreciate his appeal, and therefore we agree not to put this matter to a vote.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I am grateful to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for withdrawing the proposal he made on a point of order.

We shall now, therefore, continue our consideration of draft resolution A/53/L.18, as orally revised. I remind members that the time for them to speak in explanation of vote before the vote is now, and that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea finds it regrettable that the General Assembly is once again to vote on the same draft resolution, which is of no use at all for the settlement of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula.

I shall now reiterate my delegation's position on the draft resolution.

First, as my delegation has stated here time and again, the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is not a question to be debated at the United Nations, but a question to be resolved between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States.

The United States is the party that brought nuclear weapons into South Korea and created "North Korea's nuclear suspicion" in an attempt to isolate and stifle the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Agreed Framework between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States of October 1994 eloquently speaks of the fact that the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is none other than a political and military issue to be settled by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States.

As for implementation of the Agreed Framework, it is essential for the settlement of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula.

We have, from the first days of the adoption of the Agreed Framework, frozen all the relevant nuclear facilities and put them under IAEA monitoring. We have also allowed the IAEA regular and non-regular inspection activities on the nuclear facilities which are not subject to the freeze. Therefore, as long as the nuclear facilities are under IAEA monitoring, preservation of information on our past nuclear activities is ensured.

However, the United States has not properly implemented any of its obligations under the Agreed Framework. The United States has not taken steps to lift sanctions, as an apparent effort to renounce its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It has been nearly a year since the ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of the light water reactors, but we do not know when the full construction work will begin. Failure on the part of the United States to deliver heavy oil on schedule creates additional difficulties for our economy.

Now the United States says that it is unable to fulfil its obligations under the agreement because North Korea is building a secret underground structure for a nuclear facility. This is one of the latest attempts on the part of the United States to break the Agreed Framework. We have clearly stated that we have constructed many underground structures for civil use, and, if the United States insists on clarifying this, we can show the one which the United States claims is a secret underground nuclear facility, on condition that when it is confirmed not to be a nuclear facility, the United States should pay compensation for slandering and defaming my country.

In a word, the Agreed Framework is not a favour granted by the United States to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We have frozen our independent national nuclear power industry on the premise that the United States would fulfil its obligations under the agreement. If the United States regards the Agreement as a nuisance, it is free to break it. We are not going to beg the United States not to break it. Once it is broken, we will be free to develop our independent nuclear power

industry with our own technology and resources, without relying on the inconvenient technology of others who would not readily share their technology with us.

Secondly, there cannot be full compliance with the safeguards agreement without implementation of the Agreed Framework between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. As the Director General of the IAEA said, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea accepts the IAEA's activities within the context of the Agreed Framework; those activities are inseparably related to the implementation of the Agreed Framework under the agreement.

The Agreed Framework is based not on trust, but on the principle of simultaneous actions by both sides. The Agency's activities in our country are correlated with the implementation of the Agreed Framework and therefore should be conducted in proportion to the implementation of the Agreed Framework. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea does not have a unilateral obligation to allow the IAEA to conduct monitoring activities when the United States is not fulfilling its obligations under the Agreed Framework. If the Agreed Framework is broken, the Agency's activities will automatically come to an end.

In this regard, I would like to remind the Assembly that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea decided to withdraw from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in March 1993, but suspended execution of that decision on condition that the United States implement the Agreed Framework.

Despite all these facts, certain countries and IAEA officials are trying to turn away from the essence of the issue by urging the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fully comply with the safeguards agreement. If they are really concerned for the settlement of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula and our compliance with the safeguards agreement, they should not put pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, but should urge the United States, the originator of the issue, to implement the Agreed Framework. To urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fully comply with the safeguards agreement, without a single word about the failure of the United States to implement its obligations under the Agreed Framework, is nothing but the cowardly act of hypocrites bullying the weak and siding with the strong, which is not convincing to people with reason and a sense of justice.

In conclusion, my delegation will vote against the draft resolution because it will hinder rather than help the settlement of the issue. Its objective is to put pressure on us, thereby endangering the fate of the Agreed Framework. It will also damage the credibility of the United Nations.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the vote.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.18, as orally revised. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Latvia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Norway, Oman, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Yemen

Against:

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Abstaining:

Bhutan, Botswana, China, India, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Pakistan, Syrian Arab Republic, Viet Nam

Draft resolution A/53/L.18, as orally revised, was adopted by 113 votes to 1, with 8 abstentions (resolution 53/21).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Bolivia, Botswana, Jordan and the Russian Federation advised the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Manickam (India): India, a founder member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), attaches the highest importance and value to the objectives of the Agency. Since this resolution pertains to the activities of the IAEA, we might have been able to go along with it. We did not and could not do so because we have considerable difficulty with the third and twelfth preambular paragraphs.

The language in the third preambular paragraph of document A/53/L.18 appears to link adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the freedom to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The statute of the IAEA, which must guide all our deliberations on the Agency's activities, calls on the Agency to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world. Further, the statute stresses the principle of the sovereign equality of all its members. The purpose of those provisions in the statute of the IAEA is obviously to encourage the unfettered access of member States to the peaceful use of atomic energy, without any discrimination whatsoever, albeit with appropriate safeguards.

The IAEA's statute predates the NPT and, besides, the Agency has not been designated as a secretariat of the NPT. The Agency merely carries out safeguards of different member States in accordance with their agreements, and the concept of safeguards itself predates the NPT. The NPT is not an equitable Treaty. Furthermore, the provisions of article VI of the NPT have not been fulfilled by the nuclear-weapon States. Therefore, the NPT should not be used for discriminating between members of the IAEA.

Mr. Ka (Senegal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

By implying that adherence to the NPT, on which my Government's views are well known, alone would give access to the peaceful uses of atomic energy, the resolution deviates, and in fact derogates from, the objectives enshrined in the Statute of the IAEA.

We are concerned about how the IAEA's basic objectives are being distorted with regard both to the NPT and, now, to the taking up of matters like the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which are not of any relevance to the Statute of the Agency. In meetings of both the Board of Governors and of the General Conference of the IAEA, we have repeatedly stressed that the IAEA is not the appropriate forum for a debate on nuclear testing. The place for that might be here, in the First Committee, in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva or in the still embryonic CTBT Organization in Vienna.

We have pointed out how countries that had spoken against the inclusion of an agenda item on nuclear testing in 1995 backtracked three years later when it came to the debate on nuclear testing by India and Pakistan. The resolution in 1995 was passed without naming countries, and, even though those countries carried out further nuclear tests in 1996, no criticism was made in the discussions at the Agency. That was in contrast to the action pushed through in the General Conference this year.

Paragraph B.1 of article III of the Statute of the IAEA calls for "furthering the establishment of safeguarded worldwide disarmament" — not non-proliferation, as championed by the sponsors of the resolution on nuclear testing. We have also emphasized that the IAEA, perhaps among the most scientifically oriented organizations in the United Nations system, was in danger of diluting its scientific and technical character and becoming a shadow political forum for debate at the United Nations.

We have also witnessed the unprecedented situation at the General Conference of the IAEA in September this year, when 21 of the sponsors abstained when voting on the corresponding resolution itself, and the number of abstentions almost equalled the votes in favour. It is obvious that the manner and modalities used to push through this resolution left little confidence in the minds of member States, including even many of the sponsors, as reflected in the polling.

We were, therefore, constrained to abstain on the whole draft resolution.

Mr. Pang Sen (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The delegation of China would like to express its appreciation to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the great deal of work it has done in the past year to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to safeguard, monitor and prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The delegation of China is generally satisfied with the report of the IAEA, and therefore approved of most of the content of the draft resolution on the report, in document A/53/L.18. At the same time, the delegation of China has reservations with regard to the formulation of related issues in the resolution. China has always been in favour of seeking an appropriate solution to related issues through consultation and dialogue. We believe that the application of pressure or confrontation are not conducive to resolving issues. For those reasons, the delegation of China abstained in the vote on the resolution that has just been adopted on the report of the IAEA.

Ms. Janjua (Pakistan): Despite the considerable importance we attach to the objectives and role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the delegation of Pakistan was constrained to abstain on the vote in the draft resolution in document A/53/L.18. We were obliged to do so because of the inclusion of the twelfth preambular paragraph on nuclear testing. At the General Conference of the IAEA, Pakistan opposed the submission and adoption of resolution GC/(42)/RES/19 on nuclear testing. We believed that consideration of that issue was beyond the competence of the IAEA. Moreover, the draft resolution was discriminatory in its approach. Our position in the IAEA opposing the issue of nuclear testing was consistent with the position which Pakistan took in 1995, when a similar move was made against the nuclear tests conducted that year by two friendly nuclear-weapon States.

It is ironic that this year the nuclear sponsors of the draft resolution and their military allies felt obliged to abstain on their own draft resolution because of the inclusion of a provision calling for nuclear disarmament. The discriminatory approach adopted in the IAEA General Conference has been compounded by the insertion of a separate preambular paragraph referring to resolution GC(42)/RES.19. We recall that at the 1995 General Assembly session there was no such mention of the resolution adopted at the IAEA Conference that year regarding nuclear testing. Such discrimination is unacceptable. We would therefore have voted against this paragraph if it had been put to the vote.

We also have reservations on the third preambular paragraph and certain reservations on paragraph 9 regarding the pre-emptive assertion of a role for the Agency in combating illicit trafficking in nuclear materials. This matter, we believe, is under consideration in the Sixth Committee, and its outcome should not be prejudged.

Mr. Abou-Hadid (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation abstained from voting on the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.18, but not because of the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its activities. In Syria, we highly appreciate the work of the Agency and its important role, under the leadership of its Director General, Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei; that role in extending assistance to States in the field of peaceful uses of energy in the course of last year was praiseworthy and commendable.

We abstained on the draft resolution because Israel has not acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Consequently, it has not been possible to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, despite the efforts of the IAEA and its previous Director General, Mr. Hans Blix, as well as of the current Director General, to whom we express our unceasing readiness to cooperate with him and the Agency to bring about the success of its work.

We are quite hopeful that these efforts in the course of next year will be wider and broader and that they will be crowned with tangible results that correspond with the aspirations of the States of the region to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

The fact that only Israel in the Middle East has not acceded to the NPT, in addition to the fact that it has not declared its intention to accede to the Treaty and subject all its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the IAEA, constitutes a danger to the region and the world. Israel's stance threatens international peace and security.

We hope that the efforts of the international community and the IAEA will succeed in urging Israel to accede to the Treaty so that, like other regions in the world, the Middle East will be free of nuclear weapons,

thereby helping to achieve stability, security and peace in the region and in the world.

With regard to the fourteenth preambular paragraph of the draft resolution on amending article VI of the statute of the Agency, my delegation is of the view that the efforts made by the Chairman of the Board of Governors to find a formula to amend article VI can provide a basis for discussion and exchange of views.

However, discussing the amendment of article VI in parallel with the composition of regional groups and within the proposals package of the Chairman will only hamper settlement of a subject that has been pending for more than two decades. It is no secret that Africa, the Middle East and South Asia look forward to finding a formula that achieves their equitable representation in the Agency, given the increasing number of States that have joined the Agency.

With regard to the composition of regional groups, this is a separate item that must be treated in accordance with the General Conference resolution, GC(39)/RES.22, which openly indicates that the primary responsibility regarding the composition of regional groups lies with the regions themselves. Therefore, it is not possible to impose a member on a specific region without the prior consent of the States of that region. The States of the Middle East and South Asia reject and continue to reject Israel's joining them. This is for objective reasons that cannot be denied — its occupation of Arab territories of some of the States of the region whose populations it evacuates and against whom it exercises violence. Moreover, Israel engages in the destruction of homes of Palestinians to build Israeli settlements. It also rejects any international initiatives to revive the peace negotiations on the principles on which these negotiations are based.

Given this situation, no cooperation can be undertaken by the members of any regional group with a view to achieving their objectives, and to securing for them maximum benefit. We believe that the discrimination which Israel alleges is practised against it is in fact discrimination experienced by the States of Africa, the Middle East and South Asia which holds the right of these States hostage to the illegal aspirations of one State.

We call upon the international community, particularly the IAEA, to compel Israel to demonstrate a full and unconditional respect for the work of the Agency and for the will of the international community by acceding to the NPT and by subjecting all its nuclear activities and facilities to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the IAEA.

Mr. Ziaran (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation voted in favour of draft resolution A/53/L.18, which has just been adopted. However, I wish to place on record the following explanation of our vote.

Regarding the provisions of preambular paragraph 14, we strongly hold that any decision on geographical groupings in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is, and should remain, the prerogative of the members of the regional groups.

With regard to the implementation of the Model Additional Protocol relating to safeguards, to which reference is made in paragraph 3, my delegation believes firmly that the protocol should be applied equally and in a non-discriminatory manner to nuclear facilities and activities of all States members of the Agency, in particular to those of nuclear-weapon States.

Mr. Dausá Céspedes (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Cuba voted in favour of draft resolution A/53/L.18 because we feel that the substance of the text focuses on the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency, an agency that in our view makes an important contribution to developing countries in the sphere of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. As we said in our earlier statement, however, the resolution this year again includes elements that are extraneous to this agenda item. The delegation of Cuba wishes therefore to put on record that had separate votes been taken on certain paragraphs we would have abstained in accordance with my country's position on the resolutions to which those paragraphs make reference.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote on this item.

Before calling on the first delegation that has asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply, I wish to remind members that, in accordance with decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Several countries have referred to the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula, urging my country to fully comply with the safeguards agreement

with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). I do not think, however, that there is any need to respond to them, as I clearly stated the position of my delegation before the vote. But I am going to exercise my right of reply to respond to South Korea and to Japan only, because it is unbecoming of them to speak of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula.

As for the South Korean authorities, they are traitors to the nation, who have brought foreign nuclear weapons into the territory of the Korean nation. It is preposterous that the South Korean authorities should take issue with us, as if they were concerned about the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. They are begging the United States for a nuclear umbrella, which is one of the main obstacles to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is not a technical matter; it is a grave military and political one. That is why the South Korean authorities have no voice in the nuclear issue, as they have no prerogative relating to military and political matters.

The South Korean authorities are attempting to slander us, with the ulterior motive of isolating my country from the international community. They have no intention of settling the nuclear issue. The more they make a fuss and slander us, the more they reveal the meanness and vulgarity that are peculiar to traitors depending on foreign forces.

As for Japan, it consistently and arrogantly pursues the policy of nuclear armament. Japan is operating the largest reprocessing factory in the world. Successive Japanese Government ministers have claimed that it is lawful for Japan to possess nuclear weapons. In particular, we cannot overlook the fact that, with regard to the legality of the use of nuclear weapons, Japan submitted to the International Court of Justice the view that the use of nuclear weapons was not against international law. All this shows that Japan has no interest in the fair settlement of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. Nor is it concerned about the peace and security of the region, as it often claims; rather, it is desperately trying to find excuses for its nuclear armament. Japan's military ambition is a real threat to peace and security in the North-East Asian region. We cannot think that Japan aspires to a nuclear-free world and to peace, even though it suffered nuclear bombing in the past and talks a lot about opposing nuclear weapons. Japan should know that in order to earn the trust of neighbouring countries it must shed its arrogance and craftiness and show integrity and sincerity.

Mr. Cho (Republic of Korea): We listened very carefully and with great attention to the statement just made by our colleague from North Korea. Frankly, we are very disappointed in his statement; particularly, that part of it addressed to my delegation was quite disturbing. It was disturbing because it totally lacked that minimum of courtesy and civility of language that are warranted in serious debate on so important an issue as the report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We totally reject it.

If we were to go into detail and rebut him point by point, I imagine it would take several hours. I believe that is not the wish of this body, so I will refrain from reciprocating the uncivil language that was used by our colleague from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, language that is totally unacceptable to our delegation.

Secondly, we are quite disappointed, because, despite good intentions on the part of our delegation to find a new element in the intervention of the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, we could not detect any indications from him that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would heed the almost consensual appeal of the international community for that country to cooperate with the IAEA for full implementation of the Agency's safeguards agreement.

During the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's statement in explanation of vote, its representative argued that his country was under no legal obligation to implement the safeguards agreement, and linked all these obligations to the Agreed Framework. But this is also unacceptable to us; we made that very clear in our statement during the debate on the IAEA report, as did many other representatives. There is no doubt that, as a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is under a legal obligation to implement the IAEA safeguards agreement. This obligation cannot be replaced by the Agreed Framework.

Of course, we support the full implementation of the Agreed Framework, because implementation is very important to peace and security on the Korean peninsula. But the Agreed Framework itself does not exonerate the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from its legal obligations under the NPT and the safeguards agreement. The Agreed Framework is the arrangement which complements and reinforces the legal obligation which the

North Koreans voluntarily undertook when they joined the NPT and when they signed the IAEA safeguards agreement.

I do not think I have to cite the resolutions which have already been adopted in many international forums. We have just adopted another resolution in the name of the United Nations calling for full cooperation by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the implementation of its safeguards agreement and expressing deep concerns over the continuing non-compliance by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Having said that, we wish to appeal to our colleague from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that it become more reasonable and forthcoming in its technical discussions and interactions with the IAEA for the full implementation of the safeguards agreement, which remains in force and legally binding upon it.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): It is quite funny and ridiculous that traitors are teaching about patriotism. The South Koreans are really traitors who brought in nuclear weapons and are begging for a foreign nuclear umbrella. This means that they intend to invite a foreign nuclear attack on their own compatriots. They are also pursuing the objective of isolating our country from the international community. What the representative of the Republic of Korea has just said shows their ulterior intention of isolating my country from the international community. They do not even know what is happening politically and militarily on the Korean peninsula. They are now staging large-scale combined military exercises with the United States against us. I once again declare that they are traitors of the nation. It is very important for the South Koreans to reflect deeply if they calculate that they can benefit from aggravating the tension on the Korean peninsula by hindering the settlement of the nuclear issue; otherwise, they will surely repent their absurd and rash acts.

Mr. Cho (Republic of Korea): We listened again with great disappointment to the intervention just made by our colleague from North Korea. I do not feel I should take precious time just to refute what he has said, because he only repeated language lacking courtesy and civility. I simply reject it again for the sake of the record. But I did detect one new element — the allegation that the Republic of Korea is trying to isolate North Korea. That is incorrect, and I wish to set the record straight on this point. As on numerous occasions, particularly after the new Administration was established in the Republic of Korea, we have been very actively pursuing a comprehensive engagement policy vis-à-vis North Korea. We do not want to engage in the confrontational setting which originates from the old eras. We are trying to open a new age of reconciliation and cooperation on the Korean peninsula. The engagement policy of my new Government, which is called the Sunshine Policy, rejects the isolation of North Korea, contrary to the ghost my Korean colleague is now perceiving. We want to be cooperative and to bring North Korea into the international community for the good, well-being, prosperity and, indeed, peace, of the Korean peninsula.

Having said that, I would once again appeal to our North Korean colleagues to understand our genuine intention. We are trying to engage North Korea to open up a new era of genuine peace, reconciliation and cooperation on the Korean peninsula.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in exercise of the right of reply.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 14?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.